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## An Uncovering of Irresponsibility

It is difficult to understand how the disclosure of a long list of agents of the Central Intelligence Agency could be described as anything but a wanton act of irresponsibility that could endanger their lives. Yet that is exactly what a periodical in Washington, D.C., did last week. The Covert Action Information Bulletin published the names and biographical backgrounds of 16 alleged CIA chiefs of station and 23 other alleged senior officers. It also described the "cover" positions of purported agents in U.S. embassies, the Department of the Army and other government positions. In the article, alleged chiefs of station were identified in the capitals of the Soviet Union, China, the United Kingdom and 15 other countries. Other alleged senior CIA personnel were named in 13 nations.

The revelation of illegal activities of the CIA or other intelligence operations may on occasion lead to the identity of the officials involved, even though their names may not be specifically mentioned. But the disclosure of names for the mere sake of disclosure serves no purpose, and, in fact, can complicate congressional efforts to bring U.S. intelligence agencies under rational control.

Covert Action is opposed to intelligence agencies. That is the publication's right, although such a position ignores the reality of today's world. Intelligence is a vital necessity. But nothing can be said in defense of disclosing the names of agents and rendering them and perhaps also their families subject to reprisal by other governments or by terrorist groups. □